



For Immediate Release
September 30, 2007
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Master Sgt. Basil Berchekas Honored for Planning Work at Camp Bucca

By John Connor
Gulf Region South District

CAMP BUCCCA, Iraq--Master Sgt. Basil Berchekas, a once retired reservist who now is back on active duty, was honored for his planning work in connection planned improvements at Camp Bucca, site of the largest U.S. military detention facility in the world.

Camp Bucca currently houses 20,500 detainees and the facility and accompanying U.S. manpower requirements and logistical needs have growth by leaps and bounds. The camp was built to sustain about half its current population and upgrades and expansion projects are many and ongoing, with about 130 projects, large and small, now underway there.

Navy Capt. Craig Roll, the FOB commander, noted that the base doubled in size in less than nine months.

Into this situation stepped Master Sgt. Berchekas, a planner who is on the staff of the Gulf Region South district of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

He holds a master's degree in community planning from Alabama A&M University in Huntsville and worked as a planner for many years. His jobs included 19 years with the Top of Alabama Regional Council of Governments, where he eventually was director of planning, and a stint with the Los Angeles Office of the Bureau of the



Lt. Col. Bobby Hibbett, left, deputy FOB commander, presents plaque to Master Sgt. Basil Berchekas for exemplary service as a planner in connection with Camp Bucca improvements. [USACE Photo]

Census, where he worked to secure local government cooperation with the 2000 census.

An Indianapolis, Ind. native with a BA in political science from Illinois Wesleyan University, Master Sgt. Berchekas came to Camp Bucca from Tallil a couple months ago to work on a master plan, which is now nearing completion. He is now starting his 24 year in (and out of) uniform.

The fruits of his labors were recognized at a ceremony at Camp Bucca where he was presented with a plaque paying tribute to the manner in which his tireless efforts and expertise contributed greatly to bettering the quality of life at Camp Bucca, improving force protection, and facilitating the efficient operation of the base. Capt. Roll and Lt. Col. Bobby Hibbett, deputy FOB commander, made the presentation. The ceremony was witnessed by Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Dorko, who is slated to assume command of USACE's Gulf Region District on Oct. 10.

Among the improvements on Master Sgt. Berchekas' recommended to-do list are a new dining facility the same size as the existing DFAC; an airport; a rifle range so guards can maintain weapons proficiency; and a maximum of two new PXs with food courts.

Master Sgt. Berchekas, whose planning work included developing project recommendations for the next five fiscal years, said he appreciated the plaque and the support of base commanders, without which he said his planning efforts would have been for naught.

Note: John Connor is a public affairs officer with the Gulf Region South district, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Iraq. For more information, contact Grant Sattler, public affairs officer at 540-665-1233 or email requests to CEGRD.PAO@tac01.usace.army.mil. For more information on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Iraq, visit www.grd.usace.army.mil.